

# One Toe in the Water

by rhitmcschanm

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Summary: Dotty and Amanda are called out of town unexpectedly. Guess who gets to babysit the boys?

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> <meta name="Generator"> "Mother," Amanda said in a strange voice, as she hung up the phone

Disclaimer: I don't own Scarecrow and Mrs. King. This story is for enjoyment only. Please don't sue me, college is already taking all my money.

Author: MargravineMaKaM (MargravineMaKaM@juno.com)

Title: One Toe in the Water (5-30-2000)

Synopsis: Amanda has to leave town unexpectedly, and guess who gets to baby-sit the boys?

"Mother," Amanda said in a strange voice, as she hung up the phone. "That was the Fairebanks Hospital. Aunt Lillian collapsed at the supermarket today. They want us up there as soon as possible."

"Oh, my gosh," Dotty West said, eyes wide in concern. She quickly put down the turkey baster. "Did they say what was wrong with her?"

"No, they just want us up there quickly. I don't know how serious it is..."

"All right, all right," Dotty said, her mind going into overdrive. "I'll get the boys, throw some things into a sack for us, andâ€"

"Mother," Amanda interrupted. "We can't bring the boys. She's in a hospital. What will they do? Sit around in a waiting room?"

"Well what can we do with them? They can't stay here by themselves."

Phillip is old enough, but I don't want the two of them here alone. Besides they have that big game tomorrow."

"I'll call Joe," Amanda said picking up the phone. She immediately set it down, "No, I won't," she continued. "He's in California on business."

"One of the neighbors?"

"Maybe the Coopers will watch them?" Amanda suggested.

"No, they're out of town," Dotty shook her head. Amanda opened her mouth, but Dotty quickly interrupted, "And don't think about the Martens' they are on vacation also."

"The Smith's?"

"No, Mrs. Smith has the flu this week. We can't saddle her with two active boys as well."

"Well then who?"

Both women were silent for a moment, distressed. They were torn by their responsibilities. As the emptiness stretched for another minute, Amanda said slowly and quietly, "Lee?"

"Lee Stetson?" Dotty was surprised. "Would he do it? I mean, it's not like Jamie and Phillip..."

"I'll call him," Amanda made herself sound more sure than she actually was.

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Less than an hour later, Lee Stetson stood nervously in the King's living room. Usually, tall, dashing, and supremely confident, he was a different man as he paced the room waiting for Amanda.

"Sorry to make you wait," Amanda hurried down the stairs, suitcase in one hand. She took Lee's ice cold hand and whispered, "You'll be great. Just don't let them get away with everything." She continued in a louder voice, "Bedtime is at ten, no exceptions. They have a game at eleven, tomorrow morning. They can get their own breakfastsâ€"I know you don't eat any. If we have to stay any longer than tomorrow evening, I'll call. All right?"

"Yeah," Lee said, giving her a slightly queasy smile. "We'll be fine." This was not how he usually spent his Friday nights.

"Don't worry. You know the boys like you."

"Yeah..."

"Hey, Scarecrow," Amanda joked, "you can gun down a terrorist without blinking an eye and two young boys scare you enough to change your name?"

Lee just ignored that comment. "Tell your aunt to get better fast," he said kissing his wife on the cheek.

"I will," Amanda replied, kissing him back on the mouth. She broke the kiss off and called over her shoulder, "Come on, Mother! We have to get going if we're going to make it to Fairebanks before nine!"

"I'm coming, I'm coming," Dotty called back as she made her way down the stairs, luggage in hand. "Oh, Lee. Thank you so much for watching the boys. We hated to impose like this, but..."

"It was an emergency," Lee finished. "Don't worry, Mrs. West, you can count on me."

"Oh, you sweet man," Dotty said, giving him a kiss on the cheek. She turned to Amanda and said, "I like him a lot better than Dean." She lowered her voice, whispering, "He dresses better, too."

"Much better," Amanda agreed.

The two women gathered up their luggage and headed to the door.

"Phillip! Jamie!" Amanda called to her sons. "We're leaving! Come and say good-bye."

The boys hurried into the room. "Listen to Lee," their mother ordered them as she kissed them good-bye. "I love you," she told them, including Lee in her glance. With that the two women were gone and only the men of the family were left.

"So..." Lee said unsure what to do.

"So..." Jamie repeated. He was still slightly uncomfortable around Lee Stetson.

"Hey, Lee," Phillip said, suddenly, "You wanna shoot some hoops?"

"Sure!" Lee said, grateful for something to do. "If that's what you guys want to do?" He was still unsure about the whole thing.

"Yeah!" was Phillip's immediate answer.

"Ok," was Jamie's less enthusiastic reply.

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"Well that was fun. I'm no match for you, Phillip," Lee said, wiping the sweat off his forehead.

"If you think I'm tough, you should see mom," Phillip replied. "She usually beats me."

"Did you get some good pictures, Jamie?" Lee asked. The younger boy had played for about ten minutes before quitting and getting his camera.

"Yeah, I think so. I'm working on keeping the camera focused during action shots."

"That's hard," Lee said, impressed. "I remember your mother telling

me, gosh three years ago, when she had just started working for us that the clerk at the film counter usually pointed at her pictures and laughed."

"Well, mom isn't the best with a camera, but you should see her with a hairpin."

"A hairpin?"

"Yeah," Phillip jumped in. "She locks the keys in the car about once a month and before, she always had to have another set somewhere on her."

"Now she just pulls out a pin, or file, or hairpin and picks the lock. We've timed her and she's down to six seconds. It's amazing."

"And she won't teach us how," Phillip complained.

"I always knew your mother was a wise woman," Lee said with a smile, warming up to one of his favorite topics. "Now what are we going to do for dinner?"

"What do you usually do?" Jamie asked.

"Your mother has been on my case about my eating habits for four years. Apparently, they're not normal. So...how about if we do something completely normal and order out for pizza?"

"Sure!" was the enthusiastic reply.

"And if your mom isn't back by tomorrow evening, I'll cook one of my fabulous Thai cuisine's."

"Don't forget to get onions and peppers on the pizza," was Phillip's reply.

"Can we play Monopoly while we're eating?" Jamie asked. "We never have anyone to play with."

"Why don't you play with your mom or grandmother?"

"We never want to play with them."

"Why not?" Lee was curious.

"Mom always wins..." Phillip said.

"And Grandma always cheats," Jamie finished.

"Then you are going to love playing with me," Lee said. "I never win, and I don't cheat." He reached for the phone, saying, "Why don't you guys go set up the board. I want to be the hat."

"I'm the car!" Jamie called

"You always get to be the car!" his brother fought back.

The two boys left the room and Lee grabbed the phone. This wasn't as bad as he'd dreaded. Still he sighed, it wasn't easy

either.

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"Aw, man!" Phillip complained as he landed once again on Boardwalk. He looked accusingly at Lee, "You said you never win." The boy reluctantly handed over the money he owed the spy.

"I think you're brother is winning actually," Lee said, looking at the other King boy.

Jamie just smiled slyly. "You're turn, Lee," he said handing over the dice.

Lee took them and was about to roll when the phone rang.

"I'll get it!" Jamie said, leaping up. "Maybe it's mom!"

"Let's just keep playing, huh?" Phillip said. Lee agreed and rolled the dice. Seven. He began to move his hat when he realized that seven would send him to jail. He was interrupted in his move by Jamie's voice.

"Lee, it's for you." Jamie looked confused. "It's some guy."

"It's not your mother?" Lee asked puzzled. Jamie shook his head. "No one else knows I'm here." Lee couldn't think who would be calling him at the King household.

He took the phone, not noticing that the game had stopped as the boys watched him closely.

"Hello?" he asked cautiously.

"Scarecrow," the familiar voice of his boss greeted him.

"Billy," Lee said relieved. "How did you know where I was?"

"I called your place, and when you didn't answer, I took a chance."

"Oh," Lee accepted that explanation. "What did you need?"

"I have a job for you and Amanda. It's just a quickie, make a drop and meet an informant."

"Whoa, hold on a moment," Lee stopped his boss. "Amanda is out of town for the weekend."

"Then you'll just have to go alone," Billy said.

"Billy, I'm watching Phillip and Jamie."

"Well find someone else to watch them."

Lee looked over at the two boys who were watching him intently. Lee debated the idea of bringing them along. They'd be safe in the car. If they stayed down, nothing could possibly happen. He nixed that thought the instant he had it. How could he forget all the things that happened to him and Amanda when they least expected it? Their

honeymoon was the least of the examples of what could go wrong. These were Amanda's kids; his too. If anything happened to them, he'd kill himself.

"Sorry, Billy," Lee apologized, not really sorry and sounding it. "You'll just have to get Francine or Fielder or someone else. I'm staying put."

"Lee..." Billy began but was cut off.

"Billy?" Lee asked confused.

"Scarecrow," the cold voice of Dr. Smyth came on the line, "What are you doing at the King woman's house if she isn't there?"

"As I told Billy, I'm watching her boys."

"You're babysitting?"

"I suppose you could put it that way."

"Scarecrow, get your butt down here, pronto. This has to be done. Since when did two children matter more than national security?"

Lee turned around and tried to keep control of his voice. "Since right now. I'm sorry, Doctor. I don't care if the world is going to blow up in the next five minutes. I'm not leaving."

"You're trying to tell me that babysitting is more important than your job?"

"I guess I am. Phillip and Jamie are definitely more important than any job." Lee's back was to the boys so he didn't see their smile at that statement. "Doctor," Lee continued, "find someone else. I'm staying here, eating my pizza, playing Monopoly, and going to a baseball game tomorrow. No exceptions. Good-bye." With that Lee hung up the phone.

He turned around to see the boys looking at him with funny expressions on their faces.

"Did you really mean that?" Jamie asked quietly.

"Mean what?" Lee was confused.

"That we are more important than your job?" Phillip asked.

Lee thought a moment. The more he considered it, the more he liked it. He gave them a big grin. "You bet I did," he said, honestly. He thought about it some more, and it made sense. "Much more important."

The boys still looked thoughtful.

"What's wrong?" Lee was concerned.

"Do you really like our mom?" Jamie asked.

"Yes," Lee said with sincere simplicity.

"Our dad didn't think we were more important than his job," Phillip said quietly.

"That's not true," Lee said, knowing it was. He tried to explain, "He thought about who needed him more. You guys had your mother and grandmother, but the people in Africa had no one. Your dad was too honest with himself; he couldn't not go; he couldn't not help them if he could." Lee hoped they could follow that, even though he himself was confused by what he had said.

"I guess..." was the reluctant reply.

"I know," Lee answered. "Now let's get back to our game. Jamie, I think it is your turn."

"Ah, ah, ah!" Phillip stopped him. "If I remember, you are in jail, Lee."

"Man!" Lee said. "I was hoping you hadn't seen that." He reluctantly put his piece in the jail, saying, "Anyone got some money to loan a poor broke hat?"

The boys laughed and continued the game. Lee wasn't surprised to find no offers of loans. He gave the boys a genuine smile as they continued the game. This wasn't bad at all. Not at all. He could get used to it, and from the looks on Phillip and Jamie's faces, they could get used to it too.

They had returned to the game when the phone rang again. This time Lee stood up to grab it.

"Hello?" he answered.

"Hi, sweetheart," Amanda's voice came on. "I just wanted to call to tell you that Aunt Lillian is doing much better, and that we should be home by late tomorrow. I also wanted to see how things were going," she continued in a different voice.

Lee looked at the two boys bent over the Monopoly board and smiled even though he knew that Amanda couldn't see him. "Things are going just great," he told her truthfully. "Just great."

The End

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file.